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## **Sen. Cameron S. Brown announces Michigan beef safeguards**

**Lansing** – State Sen. Cameron S. Brown, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, announced measures the state is taking to respond to the single incidence of BSE, or mad cow disease, in the state of Washington.

“Michigan’s beef supply is safe and the risk of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) contamination in Michigan’s beef supply is very minimal at best,” said Brown (R-Fawn River Township). “It took Canada four months to report a previous BSE infection in Canadian beef herds. This month’s single incidence of mad cow disease in Washington was reported to the public the same day it was confirmed.

“Much has been learned in the monitoring and tracking of this disease in the last decade. The bottom line is that Michigan’s beef supply is safe, the risk to our food supply is minimal, and every effort is being made to monitor, contain, and prevent the spread of BSE to Michigan or any other state.”

“Michigan relies on federal meat inspectors at slaughter plants, but we have an ongoing regulatory process of feed inspections,” Brown said. “Our system of feed inspections is significant because feed is the primary pathway by which the disease can be spread.”

The Michigan Department of Agriculture conducts annual inspections for all animal feeds, including horse, cattle, sheep and pet foods. There are 225 facilities that manufacture and mix feed in the state. Of that, 90 facilities use feed that contains mammal protein in the mix.

“It is important the public knows that the single incidence of mad cow disease in the state of Washington appears to come from a cow imported from Canada and does not represent an indigenous outbreak of the disease in U.S.-bred cattle,” Brown said. “It also is important to point out that the cow in question was born before the 1997 feed ban was implemented, preventing animal byproducts to be included in cattle feed. We would have a different fight on our hands if this cow was born after the feed ban.

(More)

“We have learned a lot in the fight to contain and prevent mad cow disease since the Canadian outbreak, and that knowledge is being brought to bear to minimize any threat to the human food supply.”

As chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee of Appropriations, Brown has asked the Michigan Department of Agriculture to brief a joint hearing of the subcommittee and the standing agriculture committee when the Legislature reconvenes after the first of the year.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture is participating in numerous ongoing teleconferences with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other state agriculture leaders to monitor the Washington incidence. Discussions include whether or not to exceed federal requirements in order to provide an extra measure of safety.

“As federal dollars become available to monitor this isolated incidence of BSE, it is important that federal funds not be siphoned-off from current federal funding of Michigan’s bovine TB program,” Brown said. “Preventing the spread of bovine TB is equally important and paramount to protecting Michigan’s beef markets. While many foreign markets currently prohibit imports of beef from the U.S., it is imperative to do all that we can to stabilize Michigan’s beef cattle industry.”

Currently, the United States prepares for market 125,000 head of cattle per week nationally. Of that, 10 percent is exported.

“Michigan’s animal diagnostic lab located at MSU and funded by a special capital outlay appropriation from the state Legislature can play a lead role in the epidemiological study of this disease,” Brown said. “While the lab is not fully operational at this time, its future role as a leader in identifying disease and preventing contamination to Michigan’s food supply can have an important impact nationally as we confront new and unexpected threats to our food supply. We must insure that Michigan’s diagnostic lab be adequately funded to meet these emerging demands.”

For current updates on the BSE incidence in the state of Washington, you can call the toll free hotline at 1-888-MPHotline or check the website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

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